

MODULE IV

HANDOUTS

Module IV:
Strategies To Promote a
Positive Classroom Climate
Handouts

IV-23



**MENTAL
HEALTH**

it's part of our classrooms

S.U.C.C.E.S.S.

“S.U.C.C.E.S.S.” is a method to assess the classroom environment for barriers to learning.

Spend time scanning the classroom during group and individual work assignments. Make a note of areas for improvement, such as problem solving skills of individual learners, conflict-resolution skills during group work, and level of respect among learners. Also make a note of areas that show improvement and provide feedback.

Ask school resources, such as the principal, volunteers, aides, other teachers, or senior students to observe the classroom and provide feedback about the quality of instructional methods, the variety of presentation of lesson concepts, and the flow of information.

Check with students on the types of feedback most favorable to them. Have them fill out an index card that completes this sentence: “My teacher knows I am learning when _____.” Next, find out how they provide their own feedback. Have them complete this sentence: “I can tell I am learning when _____.” This will allow students to reflect on the process of learning. If grades are the most cited outcome, help students identify other ways they may observe their own learning (i.e., being able to speak at length about a topic, teaching to someone else, relating concepts to life outside the classroom, etc.).

Choose times, such as academic quarters or easy-to-remember intervals during each term, to determine the need for mini-lessons on organization and study skills.

Evaluate the need for additional support for individual learners and access resources for these students.

Set up a systematic way to gauge effort against performance. Consider students’ effort in your evaluation of their performance and provide constructive feedback with the purpose of praise or incentive to encourage consistent effort.

Size up your own progress. Monitor your skills and celebrate success!

Mrs. Rogers and a Lesson on Stigma

Here is how Mrs. Rogers handled stigmatizing behavior in her 11th grade English class:

“Jessica handed Carl her paper. We were grading them in class. I overheard her tell Carl, ‘Don’t touch it. I don’t want your freakiness. Just don’t touch it.’ Carl sometimes stood out because he covered his hands with the sleeves of his shirt. His neighboring classmates were most prone to notice this behavior. Jessica was particularly verbal about Carl. I wanted to take action before but never knew exactly what to say. Things get said so fast and I am moving along with the lesson. This time I was prepared to take action.

“I told all the students to stop what they were doing. I said that I wanted to try something different. Rather than passing their papers to a neighbor to grade them, I told the students to pass their papers forward. Once the papers were stacked at the head of all the rows I announced that we would have a new grading policy. All papers would either get a zero or 100, but it wouldn’t be based on whether the paper was correct or incorrect. It would be up to the class to decide how we would first make two stacks and then give one stack of papers a zero and the other 100. At first the students seemed confused. Of course, not one student liked the idea. They mostly stated that it was unfair. There was no good way to make that decision. I agreed with them and asked them whether or not they ever witnessed this type of unfairness in the way people act toward each other. One student likened unfair behavior to ways that others stereotype and gave an example about kids who live in a trailer park. Another student said, ‘It’s like when we have different groups in the cafeteria.’ I let them give examples and then referred back to the stacks of papers. I said that as a class we should agree to not judge these stacks and more importantly, to not judge each other. I handed back the papers and we started again. It took up some class time but it was very memorable.”

Brett's Story

Brett's High School Report Card: "Assignments Missing"

Teachers see that Brett hardly ever turns in his homework assignments. While he is shy and quiet, he seems capable of understanding and carrying out the assignments. Mrs. Harris decides to take a few minutes to ask Brett about his missing work. A frustrated Brett pours out his story:

"I try to go to another bus stop in the morning. Sticky Fingers—that's what I call him, he's always stealing something from somebody—he's there with the other guys. They either throw stuff or smoke or mess with the mailboxes that are on an island right at the stop. I took a cab to school yesterday just to get away from them. But I forgot some work and the driver didn't want to wait for me to go get it so I just left it. It was due and I'll probably get a zero.

"When I do take the bus, they try to start a fight by saying stupid junk. They are loud and they are always saying something to somebody. I see them in the hall at school but I avoid them. Sometimes they yell, 'Yeah, we're going to get you later, dude.' I take the late bus so I won't fight with them. I sit in class thinking about how I can get some big kid to scare them or punch Sticky Fingers or something. He's a real dummy. Last week he took my book bag and chucked it across the street. All the papers blew out. They all laughed because I had to pick up all the junk. I only picked up my book bag and left a bunch of papers. I really got into trouble because I didn't know what to say when I had to hand in my biology project."

Adolescent Development and Classroom Climate

ASPECT OF DEVELOPMENT	CLASSROOM STRATEGY
Youth strive for independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support autonomy and innovation in the classroom • Stress order through consistency, fairness, and respect • Promote involvement in classroom governance through shared values, needs, and goals
Youth endeavor to define themselves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiate between the behavior and the person • Use attribution statements regarding intrinsic desire to feel successful
Youth compare themselves to peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model positive attitude, acceptance, and respectful behavior • Forbid ridicule, sarcasm, or inequality to exist in the classroom • Make obvious the worth of all students
Youth learn from social interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop collaborative and cooperative learning activities • Seize opportunities to directly teach conflict resolution • Directly teach how to accept and learn from mistakes; and stress improvement as the yardstick to measure success • Model trust, empathy, and appropriate risk taking
Youth experiences shape future learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote critical thinking • Expect success; put forth obtainable goals • Give immediate and consistent feedback • Show how to build on strengths • Help others to view students positively

Mr. Fox and Tardiness

Aspect of Development: Youth strive for independence

Behavior: Late for class

Classroom Strategy:

- Support autonomy and innovation in the classroom.
- Stress order through consistency, fairness, and respect.
- Promote involvement in classroom governance through shared values, needs, and goals.

Mr. Fox's response to tardiness: "I have noticed that some of the students in this class are arriving late. I usually hear that it takes too long to get from the last class to my classroom. On the other hand, some students are coming from the same area of the building and they arrive on time. What I also notice is that when we start late, I have to teach right up until the bell rings. Some of you are still writing down your assignments for the next day. That doesn't seem fair. Do you all think that tardiness for class is acceptable?

"What I would like to do is to take about five minutes of our class time today to talk about hallway routes to my classroom." Mr. Fox starts to hand out index cards. "I want each one of you to write down on this index card where your class before this one is located in the building. Are you coming from the West Wing? Write that down. Are you coming from the gym? Write that down. Hand your cards up, please. I am going to look over these cards. Tomorrow, I will ask about which routes the students who travel the furthest take and how long it takes to get to this class."

In this example Mr. Fox is capitalizing on students' know-how in getting from point A to point B and the level of individual responsibility that is part of getting to class on time. Students choose their own routes, decide to avoid quick chats with friends or a feverish dash to their locker, and ultimately show respect for coming to class on time. Students are navigators of their own routes, so to speak. Mr. Fox develops this line of reasoning with his students during his "mini-lesson" on punctuality.